

## 評論 The Logic and Ethical Structure of Ultra-nationalism in Prewar Japan

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# The Logic and Ethical Structure of Ultra-nationalism in Prewar Japan

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## Abstract

Ultra-nationalism played an important role in the process of militarizing Japanese society during the 1930s, but although the logical and emotional aspects of ultra-nationalism in Japan have been analyzed, there has been little study on its ethical aspects. The ethical concepts that the writer Yukio Mishima held as an ultra-nationalist have been shown to have a structure similar to the ethical structure of the Albanian tribal customary code called the Kanun. The similarity between Mishima's logic and the Kanun suggests that Japanese ultra-nationalism has an ethical structure similar to that of the Kanun. The present study analyzes the logic and ethical value system of ultra-nationalism in prewar Japan. It was found that ultra-nationalism subsumed the logic of a society without state power into the logic of the Japanese nation-state. Ultra-nationalism in prewar Japan had a paradoxical logic, which sought both worldwide hegemony of the Japanese and the destruction of Japan itself.

As one of the chief belligerents in World War II, Japan caused radical political changes in Asia and the Pacific region by fighting the war, and these changes also had an impact on the world at large after the war. Following the war, Japan also experienced drastic changes in her political, economic, social and cultural sectors. Though Japan was isolated from the world for over two centuries during the Edo period, within the short time between the Meiji Restoration and World War II, it increased its economic, political, and military capabilities to the degree that it was able to fight against the major world powers of the time. One reason for this was that the political and military systems, which had been extensively developed since the Meiji Restoration, functioned well in terms of modernizing Japanese society and unifying the people during the period of imperialism. The political and military regime, consisting of a centralized administrative system and a combatant military force, was inclined to adopt an innovative and expansionist policy in both foreign and domestic affairs. Partly because of its strategically important geo-political position near China and between Europe, India, and the Americas, the international situation had been favorable for Japan from the latter half of the nineteenth till the beginning of the twentieth century. During this period, major world powers which were absorbed in colonizing Africa, Middle East, India, Indochina and the Pacific region had not reached the stage of materializing their scheme to colonize Far East. Japan built up its military power enormously after the

Manchurian Incident in 1931, and began to militarize its society in preparation for total war after the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937. After succeeding in mobilizing the Japanese people, the country plunged into the Pacific War in 1941. It is widely recognized that ultra-nationalism played an important role in the process of militarizing Japanese society (1).

Though the logical and emotional aspects of ultra-nationalism have been discussed several times by Masao Maruyama (1, 2, 3), there has been little study on its ethical aspects. As mentioned earlier, the ethical concepts of Yukio Mishima as an ultra-nationalist were structurally similar to that of the Albanian tribal customary code called the Kanun (4). The logic of Mishima's ultra-nationalism is paradoxical, in that his ideology, which was apparently designed to strengthen the nation-state of the Japanese, comprised an ethical structure similar to that of a society without state power. Mishima idealized the phalanx of warriors who fought for the defense of the cultural commune of the Japanese, and wished to die with the warriors in battle for the defense of the Emperor. He believed that his scenario should unfold as a tragedy (4). It is clear that Mishima, who praised the young officers of the February 26th Incident of 1936 who were executed by shooting after their uprising failed, reverted to wartime ultra-nationalism. The similarity between Mishima's logic and the ethical structure of the Kanun thus suggests that Japanese ultra-nationalism is structurally similar to the ethical structure of the Kanun.

Ultra-nationalism in prewar Japan, however, was deemed to be in line with the concept of national polity "kokutai" and the ethics which ordinary Japanese people cherished from late in the Edo period till the end of World War II. It is not possible to clearly separate the logic of ultra-nationalism from the concept of national polity and the ethics of ordinary Japanese people. In the present study, the logic and ethical value system of ultra-nationalism in prewar Japan are analyzed and compared with the ethical structure of the Kanun in an attempt to gain a better understanding of the subterranean waters of ultra-nationalism and ultra-nationalism's emotional aspects, which drove the

Japanese to fight a sacred war against the United States and Great Britain. The Japanese believed that they were participating in a glorious mission to make the whole world under one roof illuminated by the aegis of the Emperor: a world full of beauty, peace and bliss.

#### The Concept of National Polity and the Ethics of Ordinary Japanese People

The Japanese who lived under the Meiji Constitution were required to obtain a primary school education under the guidance of the Imperial Rescript on Education (5), which played a crucial role in forming the concept of national polity and ethics among the Japanese. Filial piety to parents and loyalty to the Emperor, which the Imperial Rescript on Education ardently exhorted, were the most common ethics for the Japanese until the end of World War II. The Imperial Rescript on Education was issued on October 30th, 1890, in order to give the Japanese instruction on the fundamentals of ethics and morality. The government ordered it to be read at all important events held in primary schools throughout Japan, and pupils were instructed to learn it by heart.

#### *The Imperial Rescript on Education*

The Imperial Rescript on Education declared that filial piety to parents and loyalty to the Emperor would be the revelation of human beauty, and that the Japanese people who practiced this beauty every day with one mind represented the glory of the fundamental character of Japan. The Emperor was considered to have inherited the legacy of the imperial ancestors and to have retained its lineage, which had its origin in the divine obscurity of the Universe. The loyalty of the Japanese subjects to the Emperor was regarded as having a value equivalent to the filial piety the Japanese showed to their parents. The fundamental principle of education was that children should be imbued with the teaching of filial piety and loyalty. Japan, over which the Emperor reigned, was deemed a kind of huge consanguine commune\*, which consisted of kin groups of various lineages. The members of this commune had to be willing to show filial piety to their parents (ancestors)

and loyalty to the Emperor.

As friction and conflict within a commune threaten its existence, the members of the commune were requested to be affectionate to their brothers and sisters, harmonious as husbands and wives, and true as friends. They were also expected to bear themselves with modesty and moderation, extend their benevolence to others, respect the Constitution, and observe the law for fear that peace and order be disturbed. If the existence of their commune was in danger, they had to dedicate themselves courageously to the defense of the commune and the Emperor. Only filial piety to their parents and loyalty to the Emperor, who represented human beauty, enabled the commune of the Japanese to retain its peaceful existence and prosperity. In this regard, filial piety and loyalty had to be the fundamentals of ethics and morality.

The consanguine commune of the Japanese, with its ethics of filial piety and loyalty, was obliged to maintain its existence in the international community without deviating from its own ethics and morality. In fact, it was to preach and spread these ethics to the outside world. In other words, it was Japan's self-proclaimed mission to promote filial piety and loyalty beyond her borders, enabling the rest of the world to attain beauty. This mission was the legacy of the ancestors of the Emperor, which all Japanese subjects were to follow. The Imperial Rescript on Education preached that in order to achieve this ideal, the Japanese were to strengthen their commune by pursuing learning and cultivating the arts, thereby developing intellectual faculties, advancing the public good and promoting common interests.

Tetsuro Watsuji, who belonged to the generation indoctrinated by the Imperial Rescript on Education before World War II, was one of the outstanding intellectuals in Japan. Watsuji, who discussed the relationship between culture and the spatial, communal existence of humans in *Climate and Culture* (6), explained his concept of national polity and the ethics therein. Since the ideas he expresses are typical of those held by Japanese educated during the period when the

Imperial Rescript on Education exerted great influence, they are worth examining.

In the preface to *Climate and Culture*, Watsuji confessed that when he read Heidegger's *Time and Being* in Berlin during the early summer of 1927, he had a great interest in Heidegger's theories, which tried to understand the temporal existence of humans. At the same time, he felt that Heidegger failed to fully analyze the spatial existence of humans as a fundamental phenomenon, and thus decided to investigate the spatial existence of humans himself. He discussed his analysis fully in *Rinri-gaku (Ethics in Japan)* (7), but before doing so he wrote a book entitled *Climate and Culture*, which he deemed a tentative discourse on the spatial aspects of human existence. In this book, he presented his intuitively framed theory on national polity and ethics, which led him to the understanding that the concept of *Dasein*, which Heidegger expressed in order to explain human existence, did not stand for the communal existence, but the existence of the individual (6). Watsuji thought that the spatial, communal existence of humans was as fundamental as the temporal existence.

#### *Climate and Culture*

According to Watsuji, being a human meant being social and relational. The intimate relationship between man and woman, such as that in a marriage, was the primary relationship for humans. A home (family) was formed when children joined it. The home, which saw the consanguine commune of humanity as a family, represented the entire family. The smallest consanguine commune, the home, consisted not only of parents and children, but also of ancestors and distant descendants. The gods in the home were ancestor-gods who epitomized the entirety of the familial history. A patriarch represented the home, whose present members were responsible for the past and future of the family, as it was they who had to shoulder the entire history of the family. Therefore, an issue involving the entire family preceded one involving only an individual within that family. The home should be full of affection and tenderness, enabling the family to unite tightly, with no room for rifts. Those who made no distinction between

self and others in the family devoted themselves to the benefit of the family. If the home met with difficulty, each child, sparing no effort to defend his or her parents and the honor of the home, must devote himself or herself to the resolution of the difficulty. Watsuji said that regarding the family, this was the virtue called filial piety.

Watsuji indicated that Japan had a national polity metaphorically described as the home of the homes, whose leading family was the imperial one. The entirety of the Japanese people was equal to the entirety of this home, which was supposed to have originated from the same ancestor. As the concept of the home of the homes was based on worship of Ise Shrine\*\*, which was deemed to be the arch-ancestor-god of the ancestor-gods of the homes, it was possible to interpret the national polity of Japan in terms of the home. According to Watsuji, the Japanese believed the gods to be on intimate terms with humans, who supposedly had a consanguine relationship with the gods. The Emperor who presided over a huge family such as the commune of the Japanese was divinely authorized as the representative of all. Though the Japanese home was expected to be peaceful and harmonious because of the affection shared by the family members, pent-up pressure sometimes exploded, causing fierce internal conflicts. However, conflicts within the home were expected to abruptly turn into reconciliation and settlement, thus resulting in peace and harmony again.

The State consisted of boundaries dividing the interior culture from the exterior culture. It was the ultimate commune of humanity as a psychologically viable entity. As the State was the home of the homes, the virtue known as filial piety in terms of the home was construed to be the virtue known as loyalty in terms of the home of the homes. This concept of national polity made the Japanese consider filial piety to parents and loyalty to the Emperor as the same thing. Although loyalty to a monarch is not exactly the same as loyalty to the State, the Japanese, who viewed human existence from a specific perspective in history, had little doubt believing the assertion that loyalty was the same as filial piety.

## The Concept of National Polity and the Ethics of Ultra-nationalism

Maruyama indicated that the ultra-nationalism in Japan does not have its own reference books clearly explaining its platforms and creeds (1). The adherents to the ideology of ultra-nationalism were scholars, soldiers, civilians, vagabonds and religious people, and because of their varied background, the ideology was not necessarily monolithic. In this paper, *the Interrogation Record on the May 15th Incident* of Shumei Okawa (8), *Note of Sincerity* written by Koji Muranaka (9), and *the Wills and Dying Poetry of the Members of the Great East Society* (10) will be analyzed as products of the ultra-nationalism which flourished from the time of the Manchurian Incident until the end of World War II.

Shumei Okawa was one of the chief accomplices of the May 15th Incident in 1932 who instigated the young officers of the Imperial Navy to assault and kill Prime Minister Tsuyoshi Inukai. He was arrested, and during his interrogation by the police revealed his concept of national polity and his ethics, which seem to follow typical ultra-nationalistic logic. His ideas were recorded in an interrogation record (8).

### *The Interrogation Record on the May 15th Incident*

According to Okawa, as the Emperor was to be deemed a father and the people his children, the most important goal for Japan was to achieve true harmony between the Emperor and the people. The imperial family and the Japanese were indivisible and destined to share the ups and downs of the nation. He firmly believed that the prosperity and growth of the imperial family were synchronized with the prosperity and growth of the nation.

Okawa said that the Emperor was the source of life for the Japanese because he was descended from the line of the arch-ancestor of the nation. If a person ascended their family tree from their parents to the arch-ancestor of the family, they would reach the ultimate, divine obscurity of the Universe. Similarly, if the Japanese ascended their family trees, they would each come to their arch-ancestor, then to the arch-ancestor of

the nation, from whom the imperial family originated. This structure was seen in many societies in ancient times. According to Okawa, however, the lives of the nations had been disrupted for various reasons, and the family tree that was the source of each nation had been cut, except for that of Japan's.

As humans were connected to the ultimate, divine obscurity of the Universe through blood, filial piety to parents, who were closer to the source than the present generation, was nothing more than ethical human practice. In this regard, filial piety to parents was morally right. The loyalty of the Japanese to their Emperor, who held the original life of the arch-ancestor of the nation, belonged to the same category of ethics as filial piety. Okawa concluded that filial piety to parents and loyalty to the Emperor should be fundamental to the ethics and morality of the Japanese.

Okawa said that the Japanese were destined to multiply and prosper forever in the world as the nation which would preserve the ultimate ideals of humanity. They were responsible for liberating colored people from the oppression and subjugation which the imperialism of Western nations had brought about. At the same time, Japan had the historical mission of permeating the world with ethics and morality. In order to become a nation qualified to bear these burdens, proper relationships between the Japanese and those superior to them, those equal to them, and those inferior to them had to be established. It was the proper relationship between the Japanese and their superiors, such as the gods or Heaven, to practice filial piety and loyalty. It was the proper relationship between the Japanese and those equal to them to have affection toward others. It was the proper relationship between the Japanese and their inferiors, such as nature or material objects, to overcome them. Okawa ardently preached that Japan's peace and prosperity would be achieved through the attainment of these three proper relationships.

Koji Muranaka, an officer of the Imperial Army dismissed from active service because of his political activity, participated in the uprising of young officers

in the February 26th Incident and was sentenced to death by a military court. He left his wife a will headed *Note of Sincerity*, in which he revealed his concept of national polity and his ethics (9).

#### *Note of Sincerity*

According to Muranaka, the national polity of Japan signified the unity of the nation, which was metaphorically described as biological wholeness at whose center the Emperor resided. This type of national polity could be seen only in Japan. Japan was growing and developing constantly; the nation was a kind of living organism centered around the Emperor. This national polity represented the ideal form of development for humanity. There was no ideal in the world without this national polity, which remained only in Japan, and therefore was considered to be important to preserve and idealize. The Japanese were to dedicate themselves to their Emperor, who was absolutely sacred and sought to achieve the wholeness of the nation. As the destruction of national polity meant the destruction of the divine nation of the Japanese, the effort to defend the national polity was to precede anything else. Muranaka said that he participated in the military uprising to destroy the evil which was devouring the national polity.

Shohei Kageyama and 13 members of the Great East Society (Daitojyuku) committed suicide by Hara-kiri at the military drilling field near Meiji Shrine in Tokyo on the 25th of August, 1945, 10 days after the Emperor broadcast the Imperial Rescript announcing Japan's surrender to the Allied Powers. They left a testimony (10) in which they revealed their concept of national polity and their ethics.

#### *The Wills and Dying Poetry of the Members of the Great East Society*

Tatsuo Nomura, a member of the Great East Society, said that Japan, which developed in accordance with the minds of the gods, had kept its existence as the Divine State ever since the beginning of Heaven and Earth. Japan had a sacred obligation to mend and consolidate

every nation on Earth as long as the planet was in existence. The Emperor was to sit at the center of this grandiose scheme. The Emperor, the sovereign of over 100 million Japanese subjects, was to reign over every nation on Earth because he represented the true ideal of humanity. The gods ordered Japanese subjects to carry out their will to mend and consolidate every nation on the planet, which could only be achieved through the unity of the gods and man. If the Divine State was to be destroyed, humans all over the world would lose their ideal and the light of hope forever, and Heaven and Earth could be devastated. In order to prevent this folly from happening, the Japanese subjects who firmly believed in the gods were to devote themselves to the mission of realizing the ideal of the imperial ancestors. They were to make their utmost efforts to achieve prosperity and peace all over the world by shedding the light of imperial grace on it. Nomura declared that he would commit suicide in order to demonstrate the truth of the gods, believing that his death might bring the grace of the gods to Japan.

Haruo Makino, also a member of the Great East Society, claimed that Japan was defeated in World War II because the prayers to the gods and the efforts of Japanese people were not sufficient to achieve victory. The Japanese of the present generation committed a great sin since they allowed the defeat of the Divine State to materialize. In this deplorable situation, he would dedicate himself to the gods and go to Heaven, where he would live as a child of the gods forever, annihilating all evil. He said that it was a trivial thing for him to live for a short time in this world, while it was the most important thing to live forever as a man of the Divine State in the netherworld. As the gods ordered him to kill himself, he was prepared to die happily.

#### Analysis of Ultra-nationalism by Masao Maruyama

Maruyama analyzed the emotional aspects of ultra-nationalism and its logic in the *Theory and Psychology of Ultra-nationalism* published in 1946, a year after the defeat of Japan. In this work, he attempted to dissect the ideology which led the Japanese into World War II (1). Maruyama, who belonged to the generation educated

under the Imperial Rescript on Education and who had experienced the war, was eager to understand the logic of ultra-nationalism, which had profoundly mesmerized the Japanese during World War II. He investigated the emotional and psychological source of affinity between the Japanese and ultra-nationalism.

#### *Theory and Psychology of Ultra-nationalism*

Maruyama indicated that ultra-nationalism had the power to exert psychological effects on the Japanese, compelling their emotions and actions to conformity. In other words, ultra-nationalism was not an ideology enforced from the outside, but one that came directly from Japanese minds.

According to Maruyama, Japan had a dual political system, consisting of the Emperor, who retained spiritual authority as a monarch, and the shogunate, which assumed control of politics until the end of the Edo period. Political power was handed over from the shogunate to the Emperor in 1867, when the spiritual and political authorities united under the sovereignty of the Emperor. In 1890, the Emperor issued the Imperial Rescript on Education, which declared that Japan was an entity holding its own national polity, which was supposed to consist of truth, goodness and beauty. This absolute value of truth, goodness and beauty was symbolized in the sovereignty of the Emperor, from whom the laws of the Japanese were supposed to flow. The ethics of the Japanese were highly dependent on absolute values coming from the national polity.

The Emperor, who could not be divided from his ancestors and traditional values, embodied his absolute value in association with the ancestral virtue. The Emperor was endowed with absolute value because of his link with the infinite continuity of tradition and blood, and therefore was deemed the source of morality. Maruyama described it as the structure of a longitudinal axis with infinite continuity.

The personal relationship between the superior and inferior among the Japanese was determined according to a person's proximity to the Emperor. Those nearest to absolute entity held the highest position. Being proximate to the ultimate entity gave a psychological

driving force for the Japanese to take action. This is the structure of concentricity, in which all Japanese took their positions around the Emperor and stood by the cause of Japan. According to the logic of ultra-nationalism, when the beauty of national polity bestowed by the Emperor spread concentrically to the outside world, true morality would be established in human society. In other words, world history was meant to be the process in which imperial virtue concentrically illuminated the world. This is the structure of a concentric axis, infinitely spreading virtue. Maruyama concluded that the logic of Japanese ultra-nationalism was both longitudinal and concentric.

### The Fundamental Structure of Ultra-nationalism

The concept of national polity and the ethics of the Japanese people were reviewed from the Imperial Rescript on Education to Maruyama's analysis of ultra-nationalism. In this section of the paper, we attempt to explain the fundamental structure underlying the concept of national polity and the ethics among these various sources.

The logic of the Imperial Rescript on Education consisted of three pillars. The first pillar was the concept of the consanguine commune. The Imperial Rescript on Education assumed that Japan was a huge consanguine commune, presided over by the Emperor, who ascended the throne because of his blood relationship with the imperial ancestors. The imperial line was upheld by the continuation of imperial blood. The second pillar was the concept of the continuity and growth of the consanguine commune. In order to attain human beauty all over the world, the Japanese were to make an effort to keep internal peace and order, which would strengthen the country. The third pillar was the concept of the beauty of filial piety and loyalty. As the imperial line originated in the divine obscurity of the Universe, loyalty to the Emperor was deemed an ethical act. The Japanese subjects belonged to their own lineage with their ancestors. Since the ancestors of each lineage of all Japanese subjects were linked with the imperial ancestors, filial piety to parents was deemed equivalent to loyalty to the Emperor.

Watsuji said that Japan was a huge home consisting of the homes of the Japanese subjects, that is, a huge consanguine commune. Each home had its own gods, which were related to the god of the Ise Shrine. The Emperor had divine authority because of his kinship with the god of the Ise Shrine. The home of homes had an obligation to continue to exist in the international community. If the home of the homes were to meet with difficulties, the passion and enthusiasm for action would be engendered among the Japanese, who are willing to devote themselves to battle for its defense. Thus, Watsuji's concept of national polity and his ethics had the same structure as the Imperial Rescript on Education.

The fundamental logic of Okawa's ultra-nationalism consisted of 1) Japan as the consanguine commune, the aggregates of the various lineages of the Japanese, headed by the Emperor. If each lineage was to ascend its familial tree to the ultimate point, it would reach the arch-ancestor of the imperial family. 2) As the Emperor was linked to the divine obscurity of the Universe through blood, loyalty of the Japanese to him was an ethical act. At the same time, filial piety of the Japanese to their parents and ancestors was an ethical act since their lineages were ultimately linked to the imperial family. 3) Japan, which had the ethics and morality of filial piety and loyalty, should shoulder the sacred mission of permeating the world with ethics and morality. Thus, the logic of Okawa's ultra-nationalism had a structure similar to that of the Imperial Rescript on Education.

Muranaka regarded Japan as a kind of biological organism composed of Japanese subjects, at whose center the Emperor resided. He insisted that this national polity was the ideal for humanity and could be seen only in Japan. The Japanese must be absolutely loyal to the Emperor in order to continue to exist in the world and spread the country's ideals all over the world. Thus, Muranaka's idealism seems to have had a structure similar to that of the Imperial Rescript on Education. The concept of national polity and the ethics of the members of the Great East Society also had a structure similar to those of the Imperial Rescript on Education.



In addition to that, the concept that the members who committed suicide by Hara-kiri would join the dead in the netherworld and guard Japan was found in their wills.

Maruyama's analysis of ultra-nationalism suggested a structure similar to that of the Imperial Rescript on Education. Maruyama's theory of the longitudinal axis of ultra-nationalism was similar to the concept of the consanguine commune. His theory of the concentric axis was equivalent to the concept of the continuity and growth of the consanguine commune. Maruyama also indicated that filial piety and loyalty had the same ethical value for the Japanese, and that they were the ethics and morality of ultra-nationalism.

It becomes clear from these comparative analyses that the fundamental structure consisting of the concept of the consanguine commune, the concept of the continuity and growth of the consanguine commune, and the ethics of filial piety and loyalty is consistently found from the Imperial Rescript on Education to Maruyama's analysis of ultra-nationalism. This fundamental structure is nothing other than the concept of national polity and the ethics which Japanese people cherished from the Meiji period till the end of World War II, and at the same time the logic of ultra-nationalism. In other words, ultra-nationalism did not have a logic which transcended the concept of national polity and the ethics of ordinary Japanese people. However, it is not possible to explain the fierce emotion and fanatic actions of the Japanese who fought against the Allied Powers during World War II with the use of the fundamental structure of ultra-nationalism indicated above. The answer to Maruyama's question as to the source of emotional and psychological affinity between the Japanese and ultra-nationalism can not be found only by analyzing its fundamental structure.

The Kamikaze pilots who launched suicidal attacks on American fleets during World War II left letters and wills in which they expressed their sentiments and emotions during the final hours of their lives. They said that they were happy to die for the defense of Japan and the Emperor, or they were honored to die as warriors, or satisfied to die for the eternal cause of Japan (11).

They wrote of their true feelings before departing on a mission. Therefore, ultra-nationalism, which was the leading ideology of the Japanese during World War II, evoked strong emotional reactions among them. In order to discover the true nature of ultra-nationalism in prewar Japan, it is essential to investigate the mythological aspect which lurks in its fundamental structure. If ultra-nationalism had not had mythological factors beneath its facade, it would have failed to evoke strong emotional reactions among so many people at once, driving them to take drastic action with no regard for their own lives.

#### The Logic of a Society without State Power

Yukio Mishima assumed that Japan was a cultural commune, which had developed based on blood relationships. The Emperor was supposed to preside over this commune. The cultural commune existed with absolute ethical value in the international community. If the existence of the commune was threatened, the warriors of the commune must stand up for its defense (4). Thus, Mishima's logic seems to have a structure similar to the Imperial Rescript on Education, implying that the fundamental structure found from the Imperial Rescript on Education to Maruyama's analysis of ultra-nationalism shall be related to the ethical structure of the Kanun (4).

The ethical structure of the Kanun is a cultural apparatus which represents ethics and a social order in a society without state power (12, 13). Its fundamental concept is blood. In a society without state power, which does not have a complicated social system and is dependent on custom and tradition, the blood relationship is the most important tie which makes it possible for the people to group together intimately. At the same time, acts of revenge which the offended party carries out on the offending party are the ultimate force of justice, enabling society to keep peace and social order (12, 13). Since it is not possible for someone to live in such a society solely as an individual, people must belong to consanguine groups in order to secure their social existence. A society without state power is not one consisting of individuals, but one consisting

of consanguine groups, which are the transcendental commune comprising the past, the present and the future, that is, the dead, the living and the offspring. Those living in a consanguine commune must maintain their honor in the society and worship their ancestors. The living are under the obligation to guard the existence of their consanguine commune in the society and to secure its growth. If the blood of a kinsman is spilt, a member of the kin group must take revenge on the offender and offer the enemy's blood to the dead. Thus, we can see the concept of the consanguine commune, the concept of the continuity and growth of the consanguine commune, and the ethics of filial piety and loyalty in the ethical structure of the Kanun.

The disciplinary force that preserves social order in a society without state power is the violence of revenge which the offended party takes on the offending party (13). The act of revenge is regarded as legal only when it is carried out by the victims at the outburst of ethical resentment. It is inevitable that human society has discord and conflict. If the conflict is not solved by mediation by the community elders, the people involved in the conflict are emotionally aroused and provoked to resort to violence. The ethical structure of the Kanun incorporates the urge to violence into the ethical value system, converting the violence of revenge into a sacred force, supposedly wielded by the gods (13). At the same time, the ethical value system of the Kanun could bring emotional catharsis to the people involved in the conflict, and therefore may pacify the conflict through reconciliation. The ethical resentment of the offended party caused by offences related to breaking an oath, damaging men's honor, hurting or insulting a guest or shedding men's blood is closely linked to the fear that their own existence could be jeopardized if the offense is not neutralized properly. The disappearance of the consanguine commune is tantamount to the destruction of the divine order of the Universe for the people in a society without state power. The pain and agony, anger and sorrow which any member of the consanguine commune feels when their honor is damaged or the blood of their kin is shed is converted into the idea of transgression of the divine law, which evokes

ethical resentment among them. When one generation dies, the next generation inherits the commune. This succession is deemed to be the continuation of blood, which symbolically represents the repetition of the primordial events of the lineage. The exorbitant happiness, enormous honor or deep trauma which one generation has experienced is purified and sublimated into myth, epic and narrative, and then is orally transmitted to the following generations. The vocal reverberation of the words which speak of the myth, epic and narrative of the commune may evoke symbolic meanings among the audience, enabling the present generation to experience the same pain, agony, sorrow or happiness as the original generation experienced. The experience transmitted beyond generations through myth, epic and narrative is the resource which makes up and perpetuates the identity of the commune. The events which the present generation has experienced are construed and understood in the context of the mythological narrative.

A consanguine commune sustained by the continuation of blood is not the commune of a historical world, but of a mythological one. In this regard, a society without state power is full of the symbolism of a mythological world. In a society without state power, defined as a social condition where there is no judicial power to punish the offender, the acts of revenge which the offended party carries out on the offending party are indispensable to maintaining social order. The logic that could convert the violence of revenge into an ethical force is the ethical structure of the Kanun (12, 13). Because it is a code that is supposed to be related to divine law, it can thus evoke strong emotional reactions.

### The Mythological Narrative of Ultra-nationalism

It has been shown that the fundamental structure of ultra-nationalism has similarities with the ethical structure of the Kanun, which has the potential to evoke strong emotional reactions among people in a society without state power. When the fundamental structure of ultra-nationalism is reconstructed, after being shifted through the ethical structure of the Kanun, the mythological narrative of the Japanese ultra-nationalism

emerges as follows.

#### *The Consanguine Commune of the Japanese*

Japan was the consanguine commune presided over by the Emperor. He was qualified to be the sovereign because he inherited the blood of the ancestors who grew out of the divine obscurity of the Universe. The Japanese belonged to their consanguine commune, which had its own ancestors. As the blood of the Japanese ultimately joined the blood of the imperial line, their lines were also deemed to have originated from the divine obscurity of the Universe. Because the arch-ancestors of the Emperor were blood-related to the divine obscurity of the Universe, the ancestors of the Japanese were believed to be gods.

The Emperor accepted his ancestor as a guest-god at the Great Food Offering Ritual upon ascending the throne. He offered the guest-god food and hospitality. He obtained divinity by eating food with the guest-god. The guest-god uttered blessings in return for the hospitality, which ensured the prosperity of the Emperor's bloodline. The Emperor reconfirmed and renovated his divinity every autumn in the ritual of the Festival for New Tasting, in which he accepted the ancestor as the guest-god and offered his hospitality. The Emperor presided over the consanguine commune of the Japanese as the supreme priest with divine power.

#### *The Continuity and Growth of the Consanguine Commune*

Japan was an ethical commune because it was a consanguine commune which originated from the divine obscurity of the Universe. At the same time, it was the transcendental commune which comprised the dead, the living, and those yet to be born. The ethical and transcendental commune, originating from and comprising the divine world, had the obligation to continue to exist in the world forever. The extinction of this consanguine commune was the highest violation of the divine law, tantamount to the denial of the ethics and order of the Universe. Japan was commissioned to spread its ethics and virtue to the world and incorporate unethical societies into the ethical society.

#### *Filial Piety and Loyalty*

When the consanguine commune of the Japanese was in peril, its members were to stand up for its defense. If the consanguine commune had insoluble conflicts with another community, it could thus annihilate the obstructing community in order to secure its existence. Any act defending or improving the consanguine commune was ethical, while any act damaging or negating it was unethical. The consanguine commune of the Japanese was to continue to exist in the world with a sense of honor, since it was the transcendental, ethical entity comprising the world of the gods. If its honor was damaged, it was to fight back to restore its honor. Its members swore an oath that they would remain loyal to the commune. If any member broke the oath, he was to be expelled from the commune. The soul of the member who remained loyal and died in battle for the commune could go to Heaven where it would mingle with the dead. The dead of the consanguine commune of the Japanese who died in wars were worshiped as gods at Yasukuni Shrine<sup>\*\*\*</sup>, and were soothed by the rituals performed by the supreme priest of the commune: the Emperor.

#### *Discussion*

It has been shown that the Kanun has many similarities in ethical structure with ultra-nationalism in pre-war Japan. Though the consanguine commune of a society without state power has different features from the Japanese nation-state, at the emotional and conceptual level the Japanese nation-state is regarded as an entity analogous to the consanguine commune of a society without state power. As the Japanese nation-state was supposedly based on bloodlines and keeps its existence as a result of the succession of that blood, it had features of a commune in a mythological world. Therefore, when its existence was in peril, the mythological narrative of ultra-nationalism appeared and evoked strong emotions among the Japanese, driving them to take drastic, radical actions.

The fundamental structure of ultra-nationalism, consisting of the concept of the consanguine commune, the concept of the continuity and growth of the

consanguine commune, and the ethics of filial piety and loyalty is similar to the concept of national polity and the ethics which ordinary Japanese people had. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that there was a large gap in emotions and actions between ultra-nationalists and ordinary Japanese people before World War II. People who had much in common with ultra-nationalists did not necessarily resort to terrorism, uprisings, or suicidal attacks, as the ultra-nationalists did. Pre-war ultra-nationalists were prone to take radical actions as if possessed by a demon, while ordinary Japanese were somber enough to act reasonably. What filled in this gap between ultra-nationalists and ordinary Japanese people were the emotions which the mythological narrative of ultra-nationalism evoked. The activity of the ultra-nationalists began to increase in the 1920s, when Japan began to make inroads into Northeastern China. The agitation of the ultra-nationalists intensified, especially after the May 15th Incident in 1932, and culminated at the time of the February 26th Incident in 1936. The mythological narrative of ultra-nationalism began to attract the sympathy of ordinary Japanese people during this period. The crisis in Japan continued to deepen between 1937, when the Sino-Japanese War broke out, and 1941, when Japan plunged into war with the United States and Great Britain. The fact that the international position of Japan became precarious and its existence was in peril inspired ethical resentment among ordinary Japanese people. The status of Japan standing on the verge of destruction was seen to signify the impending collapse of the order of the Universe. The critical status of Japan drove the Japanese to stand firmly for the defense of the nation. While the military situation was getting worse and the home front was forced to face the devastation of war in 1945, the Japanese made up their minds to throw themselves at the enemy. It was at this stage that the large gap in emotions and actions between ultra-nationalists and ordinary Japanese people disappeared, and both coalesced into one mind. The consanguine commune with one mind, destined for total destruction, was the tragic world in which Mishima felt bliss. When World War II ended in August 1945, Mishima was struck by the calamity of losing that

blissful world. He committed suicide by Hara-kiri in search of his lost bliss twenty-five years later (4).

Though the consanguine commune of the Japanese had the logic of a nation-state, which was to give precedence to its national interest and defend its gain, it cannot be denied that ultra-nationalism comprised a germ of logic which transcended the boundaries of the nation. If the logic of the slogans advocated by wartime ultra-nationalists, such as “the whole world under one roof”, is extended to their ultimate conclusions, the world would be united under the aegis of the Emperor. Ultra-nationalists dreamt that if Japan won the sacred war against the United States and Great Britain, and the aegis of the Emperor permeated the world, the beauty of filial piety and loyalty would be seen all over the world. This meant that ideals such as total happiness and harmony would be truly realized in human society. If the whole world were united under the aegis of the Emperor, the State called Japan should disappear (14). Ultra-nationalists claimed that even if all boundaries between States were to disappear, the shrines of the gods which the consanguine communes worship could not be eradicated as long as human society exists on this planet (14). The ultimate goal of ultra-nationalism was the destruction of the nation-states, which might result in the advent of a worldwide society without state power. Therefore, ultra-nationalism in prewar Japan had a paradoxical logic, which sought both the worldwide hegemony of the Japanese and the destruction of Japan itself. When this paradox of ultra-nationalism began to illuminate a Japan lurching deep into crisis, the relief offered by the mythological world began to seem appealing to the anxiety-ridden Japanese, and aroused emotions and ethical resentment.

The ethical structure of the Kanun functions well in a society without state power. The idea of an international community in the modern age is analogous to a society where there is no political authority endowed with the power to rule over the sovereign states. Japan had to maintain its existence during the age of imperialism from the middle of the 19th century until the middle of the twentieth century. Ultra-nationalism in Japan subsumed the logic of a society without state power into the logic

of a nation-state. The mythological narrative related to the logic of a society without state power seems to constitute the subterranean waters of ultra-nationalism in prewar Japan.

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#### Footnotes

\* Consanguine commune denotes kin groups organized on the basis of blood, such as shpi, vllazni and fis of northern Albania, gens, phratry and tribe of ancient Greece and Ie (household) or Uji (lineage group) of Japan. A member of another lineage is deemed to be a member of the kin group if he or she is accepted with rituals.

\*\* Ise Shrine is the sanctity which enshrines Amaterasu, the mythical ancestor of the imperial family.

\*\*\* Yasukuni Shrine sanctifies the spirits of the people who have died in Japan's various wars since 1853. Civilians and foreigners are included.